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TRANSITIONAL MONTH

January can be considered a transitional month as far as the movable Orthodox calendar is concerned. I consider it is time to use up the meat in my freezer for the Great Lent will soon be here.

As early as January 25, which is the Sunday on which the gospel concerning Zaccheus is read, we are warned that the Triodon or Pre-Lenten period is to begin on February 1. The Triodon consists of the Sundays of the Publican and Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, and Meatfast or the Last Judgement.

This is followed by Cheesefast Sunday or the Sunday of Forgiveness, which ushers in the weeks of Great Lent. These Lenten Sundays are given names: Sunday of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas, Veneration of the Cross, St. John of the Ladder, St. Mary of Egypt, and Palm Sunday or the Entrance into Jerusalem.

Then the great day of Holy Pascha or Easter which stands alone.

The Sundays following are counted as Sundays <u>of</u> Pascha or Easter. St. Thomas is the 2nd Sunday, followed by the Myrrhbearing Women, the Paralytic, the Samaritan Woman, the Blind Man, Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council and Pentecost on May 30.

Following Pentecost, we have numbered Sundays: 1st Sunday <u>after</u> Pentecost and so forth. Readings are specific for each Sunday until we hit transitional January. Here is where the variable number of Sundays between the two Paschas is handled by a complicated formula.

The people who prepare the yearly calendar deserve a thanks for a difficult job.

* * * * * *

Better that your heart should have no words than that your words should have no heart.

The Way to a Happy New Year

To leave the old with a burst of song;
To recall the right and forgive the wrong;
To forget the things that bind you fast
To the vain regrets of the year that's past;
To have the strength to let go your hold
Of the not worthwhile of the days grown old;
To dare go forth with a purpose true,
To the unknown task of the year that's new;
To help your brother along the road,
To do his work and lift his load;
To add your gift to the world's good cheer,
Is to have and to give a Happy New Year.

– AUTHOR UNKNOWN

NEW YEAR'S DATES

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year. "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown!" And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So many different dates for the New Year and so many different New Years. The civil calendar most of us celebrate now on January 1 has been celebrated on various dates, for example March 25 and in September.

Besides this, we hear of Chinese New Year, Jewish New Year, fiscal New Year, Julian New Year, Gregorian New Year, Lunar New Year, etc.

As Orthodox Christians, we are interested in the civil calendar, which is observed in our countries of residence and in the Church or Ecclesiastical New Year, which begins on September 1/14.

Resolutions are usually made and we know that they are soon forgotten, but this shouldn't stop us from making plans to better our lives.

CHRISMATION (CONFIRMATION)

In the Orthodox Church the Sacrament of Chrismation follows immediately after Baptism. Many people don't realize that two sacraments have been administered. From the very early days of the Church it was called "Sealing the Spirit." We are taught that with the life of the Holy Spirit imparted to us in a very special way Chrismation marks us as unique members of the Temple of God, each with certain gifts and talents.

St. Cyprian of Carthage tells us:

> "It is necessary for him who has been baptized to be anointed, so that by his having received the Holy Chrism – that by anointing – he can be the anointed of God and have in himself the grace of Christ.

What is this chrism which is used in conferring this sacrament? It is a mixture of pure olive oil and precious spices. God gave the recipe for the holy chrism to Moses (Exodus 30:22-25). Among other anointings, it was to be used to anoint his brother Aaron for the holy priesthood. It is with this same chrism that Christians are anointed as we read in 1 Peter 2:9:" ...a people He claims for His own to proclaim the glorious works of the One who called you from the darkness into His marvelous light."

The fragrance of the chrism represents the fragrance of the Spirit filling all things. The chrism is prepared with great care, by priests on Holy Thursday every year. A bit of the unused chrism from the previous year is added to the newly prepared chrism so we might have been chrismated with chrism used from Scriptural times.

St. Cyril says: "You were anointed on the nostrils at chrismation so that perceiving the perfume of Christ, you can say: 'We are the sweet perfume of Christ.'"

This "sweet perfume" should fill the entire world with the Divine Presence in each baptized and chrismated soul.

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CHRONOLOGY

JANUARY 2004

DIED: **Fr. Anastasije** (Dr. Arthur Starr) in Dover, FL.

Matushka Olga Kiryliuk, widow of Fr. Nicholas in Terryville, CT

STILL NOT FINISHED is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Cathedral in Uzhorod, Ukraine. Over the past decade, many from the U.S. have watched with great interest the construction of this huge cathedral, which has a capacity of 3,000 worshippers in the lower level and 5,000 worshippers in the upper level. Fr. Dimitri Cidor, pastor, has been visiting in this country recently.

THE DEVINCI CODE is a mystery novel which, unfortunately, is being treated as factual by many. It deals largely with Mary Magdalene giving a non-Orthodox view of her life. This is a fictional work.

A NEW TOURIST ATTRACTION is located in western Pennsylvania, near Grove City. It can be reached from exit 113 off highway I-79, just one mile east of the Grove City factory shops on Route 208. Open daily except Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., this is a woodcarving exhibit 17 feet wide, 6 feet deep, and 8 feet tall, featuring people doing traditional tasks in Slovakia. Carved in basswood are a man cutting hay with a scythe, a woman rocking a baby in a cradle, a manger scene, among many more.

ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE, an Orthodox Conference and Retreat Center, has published its schedule for 2004. Among activities are a Pysanky Egg Workshop from March 11-14, Family Camp from May 29-31, a Sacred Music Institute from July 28-Aug. 1 and Orthodox Women's Conference on Lay Ministry from Sept. 10-12. The center offers lodging. For info call 724-238-3677 or e-mail AV center @ antiochian.org or www.antiochianvillage.org

A RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR'S CULTURAL CELEBRATION, featuring folk and religious music, Russian costumes, tea from a samovar, a cultural display of icons and other art exhibits, will be held on January 11 from 1-4 p.m. at Fairfield Univ's Regina Quick center for the Arts in Fairfield, CT. Eastern Church Historian Robert J. Klancko and Tatyana McKosky, whose family was connected to Czar Nicholas' administration, have coordinated the celebration. For more info, call 203-254-4010 or toll free 1-877-ARTS-396.

COME RECEIVE THE LIGHT is an Orthodox radio program which can now be heard in many cities. It can also be heard on the internet at www.receive.org. For more info, call toll free 877-273-2348.

THE FIRST OF A SERIES of conferences designed to respond to the call of Orthodox bishops in Ligonier, PA ten years ago, to further cooperative efforts of mission, evangelism, and charitable works, was held in Cleveland from Oct. 31-Nov. 2. The next conference is scheduled for the fall of 2004 at Antiochian Village. For info, call the executive director at 877-585-0245.

ORTHODOX COLLEGE STUDENTS can participate in a Real Break program, which provides alternatives to "traditional" spring breaks and gives a full Christian experience of fellowship and service to others. The breaks are in one week increments from Feb. 14 to April 3. More info can be obtained at Orthodox Christian Fellowship's website at www.ocf.net or by calling 800-919-1623 or write OCF, PO Box 249, Boston, MA 02130.

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY is on Feb. 1 this year. Young people team up to help the needy in their community by raising money and collecting canned goods. For info, contact International Orthodox Christian Charities at www.iocc.org

BY CANON THE HOLY SYNOD meets twice a year. At the fall meeting of the OCA Synod, it was decided to ask the Commission on Canons and Statutes to continue its review of the Statue of the OCA in light of canon law, the structure of the sister Autocephalous Churches and the civil laws of the U.S., Canada and Mexico. A preliminary report will be presented at the spring 2004 session. Rev. Alexander Rentel gave the report.

HOLY MYRRHBEARERS MONASTERY in Otsego, NY will be celebrating its 27th patronal feast on April 24-25. Its annual pilgrimage will be observed on Sat., Oct. 9. Call 607-432-3179 for info.

FEBRUARY IS celebrated as International Orthodox Youth Month. This year the theme is "20 Something Ways to Let Youth Shine." More info can be found on OCA website at http:yya.oca.org/TheHub

ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH in Havana, Cuba will be dedicated on January 25. It is expected that Castro will attend the celebration. The government paid for the building, stating that Orthodoxy is the cradle of the Christian religion and as such should be the first Christian Church sanctioned in Cuba.

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH has suspended the work of the Joint Coordinating Committee and is freezing contacts with the Episcopalian Church in the USA. "We want to maintain contacts and cooperation with those members of the Episcopalia Church in the USA who clearly declared their loyalty to the moral teaching of the Holy Gospel and the Ancient Undivided Church."

A NEW TEXT The Way, The Truth, and The Life has been released by the O.C.E.C. Written at the high school level, it offers four resource sections on Feast Days and Icons, Saints, Briefs, and Glossary. Also available is a teacher manual. For sample page, send request to aodce@aol.com or for more info contact www.orthodoxed.org or phone 717-747-5221.

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND
KNOCK AND IT SHALL BE OPENED
UNTO YOU!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I wish to share with you the beautiful experience I had in doing God's work. The icon stands (Analoy) in front of the icon screen that I made have been in need of two large icons of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Most-Pure Mother Mary, the Theotokos. The size of the stands was originally determined by our pastor. Icons placed on these stands are used for veneration and for use in processions during various holy days throughout the liturgical year. Even though various searches were made in looking for two large icons (seminaries, monasteries and bookstores), the task was not made easy due to the exact size needed.

Before I continue I would like to take you back a few years to when I was visiting Eastern Europe on a mission program. I had the honor of visiting a small village on the Polish and Ukrainian border near the Bug River. The name of the village was "Zapalev" (The Village of The Flame). It was in this village that I located the Orthodox Parish of SS. Cosmas and Damian. When I arrived there I was met by the Matushka, who told me her husband was working in the field. Being a parish priest, he was also a small farmer. Matushka agreed to run out and get him as he was working with a plow and horse. Upon hearing his wife's voice saying that an American was present to visit with him, in his haste he took the plow from the horse and tied the animal to a small sapling and ran out to meet me. His name was Fr. Alexander Kulik. I stayed with him for a few days and helped him clean up some of the rubble that was scattered around the outside of the church. He was working very hard to re-establish the parish that suffered very badly at the hands of the native people of another religious faith. A previous program was installed by the government at that time of WW II called "Actia Vistula." It meant that all the people of the Orthodox Faith had to leave the area within a 24-hour notice and take with them anything that they could possibly carry. After some years, the program was lifted and this little farmer priest was now working to rebuild this parish.

Upon leaving this village and the priest Fr. Alexander, I gave him a wooden cross, some incense and some money that was given to me by parishioners from our parish. When we entered the church, Fr. Alexander said a small prayer and we also sang the "Holy God..." together. I left never to see this priest again. We have not contacted each other for some time but a daughter of one of our parishioners now supports this parish in Zapalev. God Bless her!

Now on this past November 2 when I was visiting a Russian Orthodox Church in the small town of Portage, PA, I had heard that the pastor there was from Poland and his name was Fr. Miroslav Kulik. I had hoped that he would possibly be a relative of the priest I met years ago in the "Village of The Flame." To my surprise he was the cousin of Fr. Alexander Kulik and an exact copy of the man himself. I spent most of the day with Fr. Miroslav.

As we entered the beautiful old church I presented him with a wooden cross for the altar. He was delighted because he stated that he prefers a wooden cross over a metal one. He took the time to show me the interior of the church and also said a small prayer holding the cross that I had given him. We also sang "Holy God..." in the traditional melody which was the same melody that I sang previously in Poland with Fr. Alexander many years ago.

We returned to the parish house and Father's two beautiful young daughters were waiting for us to sing hymns from the Divine Liturgy in both English and Slavonic. It was very inspirational, to say the least.

The day was now getting short and I had a long ride ahead of me, but Fr. Miroslav wanted to show me his other work. As an iconographer, he was having difficulty with the wood that he had been receiving from Phil Zimmerman. As a retired carpenter, I offered to help him with the problem wood that he had received. He was so relieved and excited that he said that God had sent me to help him with his problem.

Little did he know that God sent me to him for a special reason also. What he was about to show me was the solution to our problem of obtaining the appropriate size icons for our two stands at St. Andrews. He took a cover off two beautiful matching icons of Our Lord and His Mother which happened, by God's grace, to be the exact size that I had been looking for. I was overcome with happiness and I requested that he let me buy these for our parish. With some hesitation, he agreed. He wrapped the icons up and I expressed my gratitude to him for the sale. As I journeyed back to St. Andrews, I thought to myself, "who would ever think that I would have found these beautiful icons (the exact size) in a priest's cellar in Portage, PA?"

The icons were blessed today and our parishioners will now have an addition to our beautiful church. Thank God for all things and God Bless Fr. Alexander Kulik in Zapalev, Poland, Fr. Miroslav Kulik in Portage, PA, and James and Stella Calta and the members of The Friends of St. Andrews who consented to purchase the icons for our church!

Should you happen to look at the cross above the serving counter in our parish kitchen, please say a small prayer for that little farmer priest, Fr. Alexander Kulik in Zapalev, Poland "The Village of The Flame" and the gift he gave to our parish so many years ago where all of this all started. God bless us all!

George Walko
From St. Andrew Parish
Maple Heights, OH

(Continued from page 71)

KITCHEN CORNER

apart on baking sheet. Working from the middle to each end, loosely braid ropes. Be careful not to stretch dough. Pinch ends together. Tuck them under slightly. Cover. Let rise in warm place about 45 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Beat water and remaining egg together. Brush gently over braid. Sprinkle generously with sesame seeds. Bake at 375°F. 25 minutes or until crust is deep, amber brown. Cool slightly before serving. Delicious with coffee.

Special note: The cook places a silver coin, wrapped in foil, somewhere in the dough before baking. Before dinner, the head of the house cuts a slice for each member of the family, naming each slice as he cuts. The slice containing the coin is believed to bring good luck to the recipient for the coming new year. There is also one slice cut for the house, which denotes that the whole household will be happy and lucky for the year.

WHAT NAMES CAN I NAME MY CHILDREN?

There's no list of what are and aren't Orthodox first names, at least not in the Canons of the Church. However it is a long-standing tradition in most Orthodox Churches to give children Christian first names.

Christian names include names found in Holy Scripture, names of any saints (including the Western saints canonized before the Great Schism in 1054), feminine forms of names of male saints (Daniel - Danielle, Mark - Marcia, John - Joan or Joanne) and vice-versa (Mary - Marion), names which, in translation, mean the same as Christian names (Eugene and Kevin mean 'well born,' Deborah and Melissa mean 'bee'), and foreign language forms of saints names (John, Jovan, Ivan, Johann, Johannes, Hovhannes, Ioannis, Giovanni, Gian, Gianni, Jean, Juan, Ian Iaian, Sean Shawn, Shane, Hans, Ioann, Jan, Evan, Eoin, etc.) There are saints whose names are numbers one through nine so you can name children after them. This isn't one of our customs so it may seem odd to us, but it was common in antiquity, and is common in other parts of the world today. Names derived from feasts of the Church are permitted: Concepcion from Conception of the Virgin, Nancy from Annunciation, Noel or Noelle from Christmas, Stavros from the Cross, Pascal and Anastasia from Pascha... Names of angels are commonly used. Children are also named after the Christian virtues: Faith, Hope, Love and Sophia are also names of saints.

You can also give your child a non-Christian name as long as you also use a Christian 'baptismal' name (this name is used when the child comes to any sacraments of the Church): then when your child becomes a saint, a new name can be added to the lists of saints. By the way, if someone is received into the Church who has already been baptized, it is not proper to give them a new name. An additional name may be given, if desired.

Someone asked us, 'Is it possible to name a child Jesus?' It isn't a Russian tradition to name a child Jesus, but Jesus is a form of the name Joshua, so even orthodox families can name their children after our Lord. Other names honoring our Lord are: Sotirios (savior), Emmanuel (God with us) and Christos (Anointed). [And from Christos - Christian.] Jesus is a common name in Hispanic families.

Old-time Russian priests in America had a system for naming children when parents insisted on using non-Christian names; they took the initial of the proposed name and chose a Christian name with the same initial.

An interesting exception to this is that Serbians give non-Christian names to children but they have a patron saint for the entire family.

It's not proper to name children with diminutives of names. Instead of Sasha or Sandy or Greg, you must use full names: Alexander, Alexandra and Gregory. Of course, you're free to call your child by a nickname, but when the Sacraments are administered, the full baptismal name must be given.

Fr. John Udics

BLESSING HOMES

The tradition of blessing homes is being ignored by many people. The statement is usually made that they had the house blessed once or so, why is it necessary to have it blessed each year?

We bless our homes each year because we rededicate it to God. We recommit it to His Glory and to make His kingdom present. The blessing is an aid and means by which this dedication can be made. It is an ongoing process of commitment and rededication.

Our sins affect not only ourselves but those who live around us. It also affects the environment. (Think of people who talk to plants.) Our homes have been tainted during the year by our sins, our quarrels, our bad language, and thoughts. We need to have this stain of sin removed. We are given a unique opportunity in our tradition of having our home blessed to remind ourselves of our Christian beliefs.

Welcome the priest who comes to the home with the water blessed on Epiphany. This water is traditionally called the Jordan water by our people. Have a bowl, a candle and an icon or cross set on a table. Help in the singing of the Tropar and Kondak of the Feast if you are familiar with them. And after the initial prayer, when the priest hands you the candle, go to the rooms or places which you want to be blessed.

May the Jordan water serve as a purification of the souls, bodies and homes.

BIBLE TRIVIA

Identify the book where these commonly used phrases originated:

1. The skin of my teeth.
2. Wolf in sheep's clothing
3. Salt of the earth.
4. Holier than thou
5. Woe is me!
6. Can a leopard change his spots?
7. A drop in a bucket.

ANSWERS:

1. Job 19:20. "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth."
2. Matthew 7:15. "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."
3. Matthew 5:13. "Ye are the salt of the earth."
4. Isaiah 65:5. "I am holier than thou."
5. Isaiah 6:5. "Woe is me! for I am undone."
6. Jeremiah 13:23. "Can the Ethopian change his skin or the leopards his spots?"
7. Isaiah 40:15. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance."

LIGHTER MOMENT

A mother decided that her 10-year-old daughter, Cathy, should get something practical for her birthday. "Suppose we open a savings account for you?" the mother asked. Cathy liked the idea of getting such a grown-up present.

"It's your account, darling," the mother said as they arrived at the bank, "so you fill out the application here at this desk."

Cathy had no problems until she came to the space marked, "Name of your former bank."

After a moment's hesitation, she wrote, "Piggy."

* * * * * *

Blessed is the person who is too busy to worry during the day and too sleepy to worry at night.

PILGRIMAGE TO SPRUCE ISLAND
Part IV

Upon our return to Kodiak, we settled in to our temporary quarters at the seminary. We gratefully made use of the laundry facilities and also made quick calls home. But my phone call brought disturbing news. A family member was unexpectedly taken to the hospital. Although I was concerned, I knew that she was in good hands and focused on the days ahead.

Pilgrims began arriving in Kodiak; among them were the members of the Spirit of Orthodoxy Choir from New Jersey. They would be performing at a concert and also would be singing the responses for services during the pilgrimage.

Kodiak's Orthodox community grew overnight. Pilgrims joined an already interesting group of faithful: parishioners, seminary families, missionaries, a restoration team from Colorado, and visiting foreign students. Together we created a blended family of Orthodox Christians. We had come from all over the world and from different walks of life, but during these few days, we would share one purpose.

While in Kodiak, time was set aside for our team to discuss teaching plans. What worked in Ouzinkie? What didn't? We fine-tuned lessons and crafts. Although we would be visiting Old Harbor, as originally planned, we looked forward to more time spent in Port Lions with our next Vacation Church School.

With housekeeping tasks out of the way, thoughts turned to the pilgrimage to Spruce Island. The weather was beautiful, sunny and near 80F, so there was no fear of inclement weather to prevent our journey to Monk's Lagoon.

Thursday evening, a large number of faithful gathered at Holy Resurrection Cathedral for the Akathist to St. Herman. Young and old alike withstood the unseasonable heat for the opportunity to venerate the Holy Relics of St. Herman, our first saint in America. I cannot adequately express my thoughts and feelings of this experience, and I still cannot relate this without great emotion.

Afterward, many people traveled the short distance to Kodiak High School for the Bishop's Tea and Spirit of Orthodoxy Concert. The event was spiritually uplifting. Although I wanted to be alone, I was grateful for the company of my new friends from Colorado.

Very early the next morning, we pilgrims headed to the Cathedral to pick up our life jackets and then down to St. Paul Harbor to board one of the many small fishing vessels that would be taking us to Monk's Lagoon.

On the way, sea otters and whales in the distance delighted us. We pilgrims became acquainted and shared our stories. As we neared the shore, smaller boats took us the rest of the way. As we disembarked, I saw a familiar face. With out-stretched arms and a big smile, a woman from Ouzinkie warmly greeted me. "Welcome back, Margie!" she called out. We had come back to Spruce Island, not just as missionaries and pilgrims – but also as friends.

From the shore, it is an uphill and slightly winding path to Ss. Sergius and Herman Chapel. Pine trees are so thick with moss that some branches look like they are draped in green sweaters.

A few hundred pilgrims attended the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in front of the chapel. Afterward, many took time to pray at the grave of St. Herman. Located under the chapel, one had to crawl on wooden planks to reach the grave. Again, I find it very difficult to put this experience into words.

After filling bottles with Holy Water, we made our way down the path to see throngs of pilgrims feasting on a picnic lunch provided by the women from Ouzinkie. How wonderful it was to visit with our friends again! A teammate and I didn't want to leave. "Let's take the last boat back," she suggested. Spruce Island gave us such a sense of peace – and for me, spiritual and emotional healing. It had taken me many years to find my way to these shores. But in some ways I felt that my journey wasn't over; in fact, I felt as if it had just begun.

Next month: Port Lions, Alaska

Margaret Pysarchyk

MOST POPULAR REASON

One of the most popular reasons people give for not going to church any longer is because they see too many hypocrites there. And they are right – there are too many hypocrites who go.

We have to look at this problem from this angle. Does the presence of hypocrites attending church invalidate the message of Christ which the church professes?

This problem and excuse for rejecting Christ's message is not a new one. We have only to read Galatians 2:11-18 where St. Paul accuses St. Peter of hypocrisy. Did that invalidate the gospel that Peter preached? Some people may think so, perhaps because they expect Christians to be perfect. What may surprise them is that Jesus Himself warned against and condemned hypocrisy. We have only to read His words in Matthew 6:11-13 where He gives us positive instructions on how we should behave in chapter 23:13-33, where He is very severe in His judgements about hypocrites. He hates hyprocrisy more than people who use them as an example do.

The key thing to remember is that the validity of Christianity is not based on imperfect Christians but on the perfect Christ. So if you use the excuse of not going to church because you saw hypocrites there, rethink your argument. If you could show that Jesus was a hypocrite, you would have an argument; but to see how impossible that is because Jesus was sinless and without fault read: John 8:46 and Hebrews 4:15.

Instead of looking at hypocrites – look at Jesus.

ETHNIC CHUCKLE

Dorohaya Tyotya Maria,

Yak tam kolo vas. Toot shitko eday OK noh yah taka tired. Neska yah skenchela cleaning house nah Velikden. Yah povesila nove ferangi eh yah brala carpete nah porch e yah trepala e trepala yeh eh left yeh tam to air. Yah polishovala furniture with lemon oil polish eh smelluyeh tak dobri. Yah washovala walls u dvi bathroome e uy kuchni. Then yah waxovala shitki floore eh putting carpeti back. Yah dumala zhe yah strainovala me pletche noh me husband me nech neh helpuyeh. Ohn even had nerve to tell menah zhe ohn "don't do windows."

Koli yah konchila shitko cleanovanya, yah washovalaya cleaning rekse e hanguyuh nah line nah vonka. Moyah neighbor, tota Amerikanka, vedela meney e preshla kolo me fence. Ohna me povila zhe ohna vedila zhe yah working so hard and zhe yah old fashioned because no one does spring cleaning anymore.

Yah hotchila yeh poviste mind your own business noh yah bulla toka dobra boh yah edyu nah spovoveed toh yah sweetly povila yeh zhe yah neh spring cleanin\g yah cleaning the house for Easter.

Ohna povila me zhe "looks like the same thing to me."

A yah skazala yah zhe "that's not the same thing." Cheloveek mozhe che neh mushe spring cleaning, noh cleaning for Easter, gotta be, no choice.

Ohna bulla mad nah menhe no netch me neh povila, i ohna huffnulla i peshla domu.

Znayte, Tyotya Maria, moye kolki kolyat, me kosti bolyat, noh me house budey cheesti nah Paskhu. Yah nesnam yak Pravoslavni Chreestian mozhe prasnovati Velikden bez clean house.

Budte Zdrovi,
Barz tired Hanya

IDENTITY THEFT

One of the biggest problems that is affecting us in our ever-changing and technological world is ***"identity theft."*** Unfortunately, you are not known by your name but an *"identifier"* such as a social security or credit card number or a driver's license. One's economic and personal life could actually be destroyed by not guarding this vital information.

But, have you ever thought about your ***identity as a child of God?*** Consider the following:

We are in God's Image: God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him" *(Genesis 1:27).*

He is our Creator: "The Lord formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being" *(Genesis 2:7).*

We are His design: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works *"(Ephesians 2:10).*

Each one of us is special: "What is man that you should be mindful of him, or the son of man that you should care for him? You have made him little less than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor" *(Psalm 8:5-6).*

Each one of us is unique: "You have formed my inmost being; You knit me in my mother's womb" *(Psalm 139:13)*

He lives inside you: "You are the temple of the living God" *(2 Corinthians 6:16)*

He lives in those around us: "As often you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for Me. *(Matthew 25:40).*

He desires our friendship: "I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" *(John 15:15).*

We belong to Him: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

His love for us is beyond measure: "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death nor life, neither the present or the future, nor powers will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" *(Romans 8:35, 38, 39b).*

He gives us true freedom: "There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus" *(Romans 8:1).*

He became one of us: "He *(Jesus)* emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men." *(Philippians 2:7).*

He gives us our identity: "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" *(2 Corinthians 5:17).*

While *"identity theft"* has been called *"the fastest growing crime in history,"* as believers we should remind each other of our true identity in Christ and to encourage others to live a life worthy of God's future Kingdom. These warnings should challenge us to live as "children of God".

Raymond J. Mastroberte
Iconographer

THE FUNDS

Each of the funds has a special function. The Press Fund helps us with the ongoing publishing costs. The Postage Fund helps us to cover the ever-rising costs of postage. The Mission Fund helps us spread and sustain the Orthodox Christian faith in places other than Alaska, such as 18 countries where copies are copied and distributed to prisoners in this country upon their request, and to other places where there is a need. The Alaska Fund helps us to keep sending copies to Alaska. We welcome Sandy Point, which has been transferred to the Packet Plan. This allows us to add another village.

Giving to the Alaska Fund this month are Steve and Lenora Evancho and Mary Mamay.

William Hudak and Mary Sliza gave to both the Alaska and Mission Funds.

Donors to the Postage Fund are Jason, Collen, Amber, and Eva King, Mary Sliza, Elizabeth Zbegner, Steve and Lenora Evancho, Mary Kaminsky, Michael Uhrin, John and Theona Hatzi, William Hudak. T.A. Chala in memory of Fr. John Reinhold, Sandra Fedorko in memory of her mother Stella Shemet Dvorsky.

Undique (from everywhere)

During the Panahida, or Memorial Service for the dead, those attending the service hold a lighted candle as a sign that they believe in a future, radiant life. Towards the end of the service, during the reading of the Lord's Prayer, the candles are extinguished as a sign that our lives, like burning candles, must expire more often than not without burning through to the desired end.

Fr. Alexander Fedoronko said in Philadelphia in 1960 the following: "Who is the first one in Church before the Sunday Liturgy: sexton, choir leader, deacon or priest? Answer: none of the above. It is the devil himself who enters and sits in the front row in order to try to disrupt the peace of the congregation in any way he can."

When the celebrant priest kneels before the altar, he should feel shivers going through his spine. When he finishes the liturgy, he has distributed the antidoro (prosphora) and has finished with his catalysis, he should feel exhilarated and deeply tired.

The Lord came to the Jordan and was baptized of John, not because he was in need of that cleansing but so that He might fulfill all that was attributable to human nature, which He had assumed, and to show that He had a true body and that He truly was an actual man. He did not want to transgress the law and so answered: "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matt 3:15).

It was for this reason that He entered into the waters of Baptism. But in so doing, He gave them incomparably more than He could receive from them, for He was in need of nothing. For with His light He illuminated those very waters and gave them a certain special power by which those who believe in Him, entering the waters of Baptism, are clothed in this power, and are illuminated by Him.

Holy Hierarch Epiphanios

It must be said that while customs and culture supplement our faith, it is Holy Tradition that leaves Orthodoxy as the last true sanctuary of Christianity and one of the only remaining religious traditions that places enormous value on worship.



Editor's Notes

I have done it tens of times before. I removed a clock from the wall because it needed a new battery. On my way down the ladder, I missed the last step and "shattered" my ankle. Following surgery, where steel plates were placed around my ankle "lodeshka," I was taken to a room on the 5th floor of the hospital. The next morning at 6:30, the nurse awakened me and pulled back the blinds from the huge window so that I could see the beautiful sunrise. It is hard to describe the colorful view of layers and layers of brilliant shades of pink, salmon to deep rose, which stretched layer upon layer across the sky. And in the center of this beauty, down near the bottom of my view, were two round domes topped by three barred crosses. What beauty and what a message from God in my time of pain and trouble! I shall carry the scene forever in my memory box to pull it out whenever I need it.

A special thanks to all parishes and individuals who responded so promptly to the billings, which were sent out in December. It helps us to keep the Packet Plan more accurate. We are always happy to add members to our Packet Plan family. We were especially pleased by the number of people who have donated packets to their parish in memory of a loved one. Call 570-256-7232 for information about this.

We start a New Year this month. May the words of the greeting "Christ is born! "Glorify Him" make life more fulfilling for you.

Matushka Nina Stroyen

PRESS FUND

Thank You/Spasebo for your help in keeping us publishing. Anonymous, Irene Allen, Mary Matrician, Sandra Hosmer, Ann Dorozynski, Anna Palceski, Robert and Martha Littlefield, St. John's Parish in Philipsburg, PA, Vasiliki Koumoutseas, Olga Peck, Helen Kennedy, William Hudak, Mike Christopulos, Mary Sliza, Catherine Shaffchick, Nicholas Znak, Oleg Dudkin, Helen Tucker, Julia Golit, Ann Pehota, Steve and Lillian Sokol, Mary Kochmaruk, Doris Koveal, Helen Durniak, Mary Maholick.

Rose Minarick in memory of her husband John and brother Peter Danisher.

Helen Lewis in memory of her sister Anna, who died May 16, 2003.

Helen Kneseley in memory of Mary Kinn.

Helen Lesko in memory of Fr. Basil.

Maria Derkash in memory of her husband William.

Ann O'Brien in memory of her husband Ernie, who died on July 19, 03 and her sister Velma Bova, who died on August 12, 03.

Elizabeth Cassia in memory of her parents John and Mary McCobin.

Steve and Lenora Evancho for health of Matushka Nina and Claudia Sulin, and Alex and Madeline Evancho, Elizabeth Uhrin. Also in memory of Fr Basil and George Uhrin.

Matushka Nina Stroyen in memory of newly-departed niece Olga Hromyak, who died on Dec. 25, 03, Matushka Olga Kiryliuk, who died on Dec. 1, 03 and Fr. Annastasye, who died on Oct. 03.

PRAYERS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things. Treasury of blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Dear Lord, thank You for Your Holy Spirit, who comforts us in times of sorrow, guides us to do Your will, and takes our prayers to Your throne. Help us to trust that all things are in Your hands and that You have left nothing undone.

PASCHAL CALENDAR FOR 2004

Publican and Pharisee, beginning of Lenten Triodon	Feb. 1
Meatfast Sunday	Feb. 15
Cheesefast - Forgiveness Sunday	Feb. 22
Lent Begins	Feb. 23
Palm Sunday - Entrance into Jerusalem	Apr. 4
Pascha for Orthodox and Western Christians	Apr. 11
Ascension	May 20
Pentecost	May 30



Most people have special foods which they eat on New Year's. Among them are pork and sauerkraut, black beans and rice, etc. For the Greek Orthodox, it is traditional to have a rich bread which is called Vasilopeta (St. Basil's bread whose name day is celebrated on January 1). Here is a recipe for the bread and directions for embedding the silver coins.

VASILOPETA

1 pkg. active dry yeast
1/4 cup warm 105° to 110° water
1/3 cup sugar
1/4 cup butter, softened
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup milk
1 1/2 tsp. whole cardamom seed or 1 tbs. ground cardamom or mahlepi
2 3/4 to 3 cups flour
1 egg, beaten
1 tbs. water
1 egg
3 tbs. sesame seeds

Sprinkle yeast over water. Mix until dissolved. Combine sugar, butter and salt in large mixing bowl. Heat milk to scalding. Pour into mixing bowl. Stir until butter melts. Cool to lukewarm. Crush cardamom seeds with mortar and pestle.

Stir into mixing bowl. Stir in one cup flour. Beat well. Add beaten egg and dissolve yeast. Beat well. Gradually mix in remaining flour to make a soft, but not sticky, dough. Place on floured surface. Cover. Let rest 10 minutes. Knead until smooth and elastic, 8-10 minutes. Shape dough into ball. Place it in a lightly-oiled bowl. Turn to grease all sides. Cover. Set in warm place 1 1/2 hours or until doubled in size. Punch down. Let rise another hour until almost doubled again. Turn dough onto floured surface. Divide into 3 equal parts. Shape each part into a ball. Cover. Let rest 10 minutes. Grease a baking sheet. Set aside. Use hands to roll each dough ball into an 18-inch rope. Taper ends. Line ropes 1 inch

(Continued on Page 67 Col. 3)

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HOW DO I PREPARE MY HEART TO LISTEN TO GOD?

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WINTER'S GRACE

As we grow older, it is with greater difficulty that we can get to church or stand through the whole service. We are ashamed to sit, although, it is permissible and expected. Even the early churches had seats on the sides, along the walls of the church, for the elderly and disabled or wounded.

I was thinking about my place in the church for services as I was putting together a puzzle. I was pleased. A few more pieces to go, and the giant puzzle would be finished. As I fitted the pieces together, I thought how beautiful the puzzle scene would look when it was completed. I had been working on it for several days. Then, I discovered that one piece was missing. This annoyed me. I felt that all the time and energy I had invested had been a waste. Without that piece, the picture would not be complete and beautiful.

I drew a spiritual parallel to this. We in the church sometimes resemble those puzzle pieces. God has given life itself to each of us. When we are united and complete we shine, and we can rejoice in that. However, when someone is absent or is not in the church for prayer there is an empty spot, a missing piece.

The church is much more beautiful when all the pieces of the puzzle are in place.

We are told in Hebrews 10:24, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together but that we should hold fast in the profession of our faith.

* * * * * *

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when people are afraid of the Light.

Home Bible Reading Schedule

JANUARY 2004

1. Mark 11:27-33	17. Luke 16:10-15
2. Mark 12:1-12	**18. Matt 15:21-28**
3. Luke 17:3-10	19. Mark 10:46-52
4. Mark 1:1-8	20. Mark 11:11-23
5. Luke 3:1-18	21. Mark 11:22-26
6. Matt 3:13-17	22. Mark 11:27-33
7. Mark 8:22-26	23. Mark 12:1-12
8. Mark 8:30-34	24. Luke 17:3-10
9. Mark 9:33-41	**25. Luke 19:1-10**
10. Luke 14:1-11	26. Mark 12:13-17
11. Luke 18:18-27	27. Mark 12:18-27
12. Mark 9:42-10:1	28. Mark 12:28-37
13. Mark 10-2-12	29. Mark 12:38-44
14. Mark 10:11-16	30. Mark 13:1-8
15. Mark 10:17-23	31. Luke 18:2-8
16. Mark 10-23-33	

BIBLE STUDY

On January 15 we read from Mark 10:17-23. This reading is repeated in both Matt 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30. It deals with the rich young man. The difference in these readings hinges upon the saying of Jesus: "they that have riches" and they "that trust in riches."

It is said that a crane was wading in a stream and looking for snails to eat when a beautiful swan landed nearby. The crane had never seen a swan before, so he asked, "What are you?"

"I'm a swan," came the reply.

"And where did you come from?" the crane inquired.

"Heaven," the swan answered and he eagerly spoke of a city of pure gold with jasper walls and pearly gates.

At that point the crane interrupted, "Tell me, are there snails in heaven?"

"No, I'm afraid not," the swan said.

"Then I don't care to go there," the crane stated decisively. "I like snails!"

Some people think like the crane in this old fable. They are so enamored by earthly possessions that they fail to appreciate the eternal riches of Christ and all He offers. Like the rich young man we read about in Mark 10, they foolishly choose the things of the earth instead of the wonderful realities of heaven. They trust in their riches.

Compared to the glories of heaven, the best things of this world are but snails!

WERE YOU DUNKED?

Some people are complaining because their priest wishes to purchase a baptismal font. Their thinking is that their church has been in existence for at least fifty years and has been without one, why now?

The word "baptizing" is derived from the Greek verb bap'to, meaning "to dip in." (John 13:26). In the Bible, "to baptize" is the same as "to immerse."

Concerning the baptism of the Ethopian eunuch performed by Philip discussed in Acts 8:38, we read: "and they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water..."

We also see that Jesus was immersed in the water in Matt 3:16; "And Jesus when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water..." In Mark 1:10 we read: "Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan and straightway coming up out of the water..."

Baptism by complete immersion is a Scriptural requirement and has been practiced in the Church from its very inception.